

Iowa People and Events ...

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LeGrand, Iowa, Fossils

It is with great pleasure and considerable pride that the Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Museum Division, announces the recent purchase of four of the finest slabs of fossil bearing limestone from the world famous collection of Dr. B. H. Beane of LeGrand, Iowa.¹ This acquisition consists of three magnificent pieces bearing the beautifully preserved fossil crinoids, and one incredible three-foot by five-foot slab containing 183 specimens of fossil starfish. These starfish comprise without doubt the finest single collection of early starfish in existence. These specimens present eloquent testimony to the conditions that prevailed in Iowa some 250 million years ago when our state was largely covered by the shallow seas in which these fragile animals lived.

Unusual conditions indeed must have been present at the time of death and entombment in marine mud of these small animals, for the unbroken and unscattered condition of their delicate fossil remains is truly remarkable. Some of the species represented can even be identified by color alone for the preservation has seemingly caused the fossils to retain color differences that they may have had when living. Thus in a single small group, one species will show its characteristic dark purple brown color, another species its characteristic snowy white, and yet another species its characteristic mottled purple on white.

Citizens of Iowa owe a vote of thanks to the many individuals in both public and private life, who devoted themselves unselfishly to bring about the acquisition. Particular credit is due to both Dr. Beane, who originally discovered and prepared the specimens and made them available for purchase, and the Fifty-ninth General Assembly which appropriated the necessary funds.

The public is expressly invited to view the collection now on permanent display at the State Museum in Des Moines.

¹ Charles S. Gwynne, "B. H. Beane and the LeGrand Crinoid Hunters," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. XXXV, Third Series, pp. 481-490.

Odd Stories Disclose How Iowa Towns Got Named

Des Moines Register April 27, 1959

A racehorse named Dexter, a \$50 bill from an Ohio congressman, and a Dutch count made history in Iowa in the 1800's. Each influenced the naming of an Iowa town.

Dexter was named for the racehorse. Vinton was named after the Ohio congressman, Plym Vinton, who paid \$50 for the honor. Maurice was named for Count Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange and son of William the Silent.

These are only a few of the oddities surrounding the naming of Iowa towns.

Take the case of Elkader. In 1845, Algerians, led by Abd-El-Kader, were fighting French imperialists over-running their country. Iowa pioneers, impressed by the courage of the Algerian leader, named Elkader in his honor.

Davis County commissioners placed three names—Jefferson, Davis, and Bloomfield—in a top hat, and the town was named Bloomfield when the slip bearing that name was drawn.

In Story county, after a construction train crushed John Blair's dog, Colo, under its wheels, the railroad official named the town of Colo in the dog's memory.

Primghar combines the first letters of the surnames of eight early settlers. Le Mars took its name from the first initials of six young women who visited the settlement in pioneer days — Lucy Underhill, Elizabeth Parsons, Mary Weare, Anna Blair, Rebecca Smith and Sarah Reynolds.

Correctionville, in Woodbury county, "was so named by surveyors because the town lies on a correction line established for verification and correction of land surveying." And Lineville has its name because it lies on the Iowa-Missouri boundary.

Extraordinary stories surround the naming of Winterset, Indianola, Waverly, and Monona.

Two names were considered for the Madison county seat by county commissioners. They were Independence and Summerset. After considerable debate, one of the commission members, shivering with cold, said, "Summerset! You'd a damn sight better name it Winterset!"

In 1849 a surveyor for the Warren county seat brought

his lunch in a newspaper—a rare article in those days. One surveyor noticed an item about a now extinct Texas town, Indianola. The men chose the name for the Iowa village they were surveying.

Pioneers gathered to witness the naming of one Iowa town. It was to be named for its founder, W. P. Harmon. But the chief speaker had just read one of Waverly's novels, and mistakenly uttered Waverly instead of Harmon. Harmon raised no objections, and the name stuck.

Believing that her white lover had been killed by her own people, an Indian girl jumped from a high cliff into the Mississippi River. An Iowa community was named Monona after the girl. Later it was discovered that the girl's name wasn't Monona at all—but Winona.

In 1851, pioneers of Prairie Rapids, on the Cedar River in northeast Iowa, petitioned for a post office. Charles Mullan took the document to Cedar Falls to have it signed by the postmaster. While paging through a post office directory there, Mullan saw the name, Waterloo, and because it had the "right ring to it," the name was inserted in the petition.

A northwestern Iowa village was called both Marvin (after a railroad official) and Cedarville (because it was near Cedar Creek). Finally, settlers abandoned both names, and chose Fonda, because it was listed only once in the U. S. post office directory.

One town was originally called Portlandville but was changed to Akron when settlers believed that it would grow to the size of Akron, Ohio.

Some pioneers believed that their village was halfway between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and they decided their town should be named either Atlantic or Pacific. Pacific won the coin toss. But it was learned that many towns were named Pacific, and so the decision was reversed to Atlantic.

Afton took its name from a river in the Old Scottish song, "Flow Gently Sweet Afton."

Panora's name is a contraction of the word, "panorama." Supposedly, a pioneer, viewing the settlement from a hill, exclaimed, "What a beautiful panoramal!"

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